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A SERMON,

DELIVERED AUGUST 8, 1841, BY TOWNSEND P. ABELL,

IN EXAMINATION OF

'A Discourse preached June 20, 1841, by Rev. Charles Fitch,

IN REVIEW OF A SERMON

BY REV. OTIS A. SKINNER,

AT THE

Installation of Rev. T. P. Abell'

AS PASTOR OF THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY,

IN HAVERHILL, MASS.

THE "FATAL MISTAKE" MIS-TAKEN.

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'Who can understand his errors?' DAVID.

BOSTON:
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1841.

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Sermon.

PHILIPPIANS i. 17:

'*I am set for the defence of the Gospel.*'

IT is unquestionably true that every religious teacher, whatever may be his distinctive theory, has connected with his office a deep personal responsibility, and that the manner in which he discharges his functional duties is in a great measure indicative of his sincerity and faithfulness. Whenever an individual has been set apart for the promulgation and defence of any particular system or sentiment, it is expected that he will not only be in readiness to 'give a reason' of the faith he cherishes on ordinary occasions, but that he will be prepared to defend, so far and as effectually as his ability will enable him to do, that faith against the controversial attacks of its opposers. If, in his ministerial practice, there are found evident indications of an unwillingness to do this, we are at once induced to suspect his honesty, or the permanency of his avowed convictions, if not also the soundness of his religious system.

The same desire for the accomplishment of a faithful discharge of duty, which prompted the preaching and the publication of a Review of an installation Sermon recently preached in this desk, now leads me to make some passing strictures upon that Review, with the hope that, whilst I shall have an opportunity of acknowledging the comparative candor of its author, I may also point out, and in a measure correct, some of its most important errors. While I shall claim for myself the privilege of using great freedom and plainness of speech, it shall be my aim to treat the feelings and sentiments of others with a suitable degree of respect.

The discourse to be examined will measurably determine the character, as well also as the arrangement of our remarks. And though they may seem somewhat promiscuous and disconnected, we prefer making our suggestions on the commendable and excep-

tionable parts, as we shall find occasion, rather than attempt the assorting of them under respective divisional heads. In some instances, from a want of time, we shall be constrained to say less than the importance of the subjects would seem to demand; and for the same reason we shall feel obliged to pass by some things of minor consideration which we should otherwise like to notice; but we nevertheless hope that the reflections we shall submit may not be altogether unsuccessful in giving you more just views of the nature and character of the Gospel of Christ.

We may as well acknowledge here as elsewhere, that our present labor in many respects is a more agreeable one than usually falls to the lot of those who are called to examine the attacks of the opposers of our faith. Hitherto we have suffered not by any means an inconsiderable amount of abuse, calumny, and misrepresentation. And although the discourse before us is not entirely free from the last named fault, we are enabled notwithstanding to pronounce it much less exceptionable in this respect than the majority of those of the like character with which we have previously met. It evidently bears the marks of an earnest mind, — of one that considers candor and charity far from being the least among the christian virtues. And when we meet with assertions, as we do with very many of them, which appear to indicate a lack of the pervading influence of these graces, we are inclined to impute them, with all deference to the theological attainments of the author, rather to a want of an acquaintance with the system against which he here discourses, and he is therefore, in our judgment, necessarily unprepared to award proper credit to its peculiar merits.

He gives us, it is true, some important doctrinal concessions, — plain evidences, according to our apprehensions of the truth, of his nearer approach to the Kingdom than many who have gone before him in the same field of labor. He manifests more than ordinary liberality of sentiment and feeling; and though this effort gives us no occasion to doubt the strength of his attachment to the main doctrines of the popular church, we are grateful that he has given us the acknowledgment of his comparatively liberal views in a permanent form.

Nevertheless we are obliged to infer, after a careful consideration of his remarks, that he has, on the whole, but imperfect impressions concerning the distinguishing principles of our faith. He seems by no means to have fully apprehended them. He sees 'danger to immortal souls in this community, by the efforts which are made to persuade men to the belief of the doctrine of Universal Salvation'; and yet, if, in the discourse before us, he has been just to his own convictions, his mind fails of compassing that great doctrine. He seems to have had but partial and indistinct glimpses of it. He seems to have listened almost wholly to the popular voice pronouncing judgment against it. We cannot believe this

sermon to be the production of one who has gathered his knowledge of our system from the most direct and unquestioned sources, and who has made its essential elements the subject of long, and deep, and unprejudiced study. With all its apparent sincerity and candor, it is marked by an egregious fault,— one which will render its mission ineffectual to those it holds as errorists. Far more powerfully had the tones of that 'note of warning' fallen upon our hearts, did they not betray on the part of him who utters them, a lamentable want of a just acquaintance with our doctrine.

Yet, as we have before intimated, sufficient attention has been given to our claims to secure some important acknowledgments. It is allowed that our system is not altogether incompatible with truth,— that it has some traits that are in strict accordance with the Gospel.

Our chief sin as Universalists,— the very 'head and front of our offending'— has been the fact, I believe, that we decidedly dissent from the major part of the religious community in regard to the object of the Gospel mission. While we have all along contended that it was to save men from sin, our opposers have taught, and they have also liberally censured us for denying, that it was to save men from the miseries— we may say punishments — to be inflicted in the future world. We have supposed that this view was the grossest perversion of the Gospel plan,— that it was the veriest impeachment of the divine attributes,— that its support required the violation of the plainest principles of reason and of scriptural interpretation, and also justified the most unworthy appeals to human selfishness, and we have not hesitated to declare these as our most solemn convictions; and, as might have been expected, the world has not hesitated to denounce us as the rankest heretics for so doing.

But, in regard to this subject, and without entering into the merits of this question, it affords us some satisfaction to be able to state that the author of the sermon under notice bears testimony to the correctness of some of our leading and fundamental principles. He affirms without hesitation, 'that it is the design of the Gospel to save men from sin.' He says further :— 'I believe it may have been true, in some cases, at least, that this grand truth has been kept out of sight; while the Gospel has been held forth as rather a way of salvation from hell, than from sin.' And then he proceeds to prove that such is the design of the Gospel by adducing several passages, some of which are frequently refered to by Universalists, from the Jewish and the New Testament scriptures.

Now everybody knows that in 'some cases' by no means few or rare, 'the Gospel *has* been held forth as rather a way of salvation from hell, than from sin.' This is the 'body and being' of the religion of the day. It is the Alpha and Omega of common preaching. It is the pith and marrow of the homilies you hear in two-thirds of the churches throughout Christendom. Ministers

make no compromise in this matter. They set themselves about their work, as though it were not possible that they could mistake the true design of the Gospel. Hell,—hell, seems the great thing to be shunned; as they understand it, the just punishment due us, is what we are to strive so industriously to avoid, and, strange enough, this Gospel is thought to have been contrived by the Almighty himself exclusively for the purpose of giving us the means of escaping that just punishment.

But we are encouraged to hope for a better state of things, when Universalists shall not be so entirely alone in their understanding of this subject. Our preacher says,—'I greatly rejoice, that it is beginning to be recognized more and more, as the great design of the Gospel to make men pure and holy, and thereby "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."' And though we also rejoice as heartily, we must still be severely censured for laboring for the more general recognition of this great truth. We must needs meet with prompt and uncompromising opposition, even from some of those who confessedly agree with us in our views of the design of the Gospel.

Among the many unjust sentiments ascribed to us by blinded bigotry or wilful intolerance, there has probably been none more utterly unauthorised than this, viz;—that all men,—the vilest as well as the best,—would pass unchanged into Heaven. This has been generally supposed to be one of our main doctrines—the one which peculiarly distinguished us from all other sects, and which ought to brand us as the most obstinate sinners against reason, common sense and the Bible. The conviction has been extensively prevalent and permanent, that such, as it relates to human destiny, was our characteristic view; and many of the pious have raised their meek eyes toward Heaven in wondering astonishment at the daring enormity of our error; and one of the principal labors devolving upon our public advocates, has been the correction of this false impression. And it therefore affords us not a little pleasure to meet with a statement in the discourse under examination so candid as the following, and, in quoting it, we very sincerely tender the author our thanks for his assistance in disabusing the public mind on this subject. He says,—

"I know it has sometimes been said of Universalists, that they maintain that men of all characters will be taken to Heaven. This charge is manifestly false. They believe that all men will become holy, and then be received to Heaven; and I rejoice to admit, that in assuming it as the grand and glorious design of the Gospel, to save men from sin, they hold forth a sentiment which harmonizes with the whole tenor of sacred scripture."

Here we have the concession that it is possible, common opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, at least for some little good to come 'out of Nazareth,'—that it is possible for Universalists, so intellectually blinded and morally corrupt as they are supposed

to be, to hold forth, as a prominent article of their faith, 'a sentiment which harmonizes with the whole tenor of sacred scripture.'

It is still thought, however, that we embrace a 'fatal mistake,' which, we are assured, will be subsequently specified. In the meantime our attention is directed to some of the statements contained in the Installation Sermon to which we have before refered.

In that sermon we were told that the 'power of the Gospel does not consist in propitiatory worship.' To this it is replied that 'men need a propitiatory sacrifice, in coming to God with acceptance;' and as an evidence of this we are referred to the fact that 'Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' And it is added,—'if therefore no propitiation had been necessary, God certainly would never have provided one.'

The denial of propitiatory worship as constituting a part of the Gospel system, was not intended as a denial of the scriptural doctrine of atonement, but only to indicate our rejection of the common views of this doctrine.

It may be well to inquire here,—For what purpose was this propitiation provided? Was it to reconcile God to men, or men to God? Was it that divine ill-will might have some object upon which to wreak its infinite vengeance, or was it that One might 'bear witness to the truth,' and thus 'vindicate the ways of God to men?' Was it that increased darkness should be gathered around the Divinity—that terrors, additional to those entertained at the time of the offering up of that sacrifice, should be attached to the character of the Supreme Ruler? Or was it that men should have enlarged and more correct views of God, and that they should be henceforth taught to worship the Great Spirit in SPIRIT and in TRUTH? The gods of heathenish idolatry were vindictive and cruel, and the object of the worship tendered them was to appease their wrath and secure their favor. But, shall we say the same of the God of Christianity? Shall we suppose him essentially possessed of the same malevolent and capricious nature, and as demanding, virtually, the same worship in character and spirit?

There is not a little misunderstanding of this subject. The scriptures assure us that Christ is *the* Propitiation. Propitiation signifies the means by which a union, a reconciliation is effected. Christ is not the Propitiator, but rather the *Propitiation* itself. That is, he does not purchase God's favor toward his children, as a vicarious sacrificial victim, but he is the means or medium through which we are reconciled to God, and have access to him. In this sense therefore, and not in the sense of a Deity-appeasing agent, is Jesus the Propitiation for the sins of the world. 'For'—so the Apostle assures us in speaking of the equal favor manifested toward the Jews and Gentiles,—'for *through* him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.'

I have to offer but a brief remark, accompanied with two or three

quotations from scripture, on the subject of 'mysteries.' The term mystery, as it generally occurs in the New Testament, signifies something which had been previously unrevealed or unknown. 'Behold, I *show* you a mystery.' 'By *revelation* he made *known* unto me the mystery.' 'Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my *knowledge* in the mystery of Christ.' 'It is given unto you to *know* the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven.' These passages are sufficient to show us that the general understanding of this term is not a little erroneous. And it was in view of this erroneous understanding of it, that it was said that the 'power of the Gospel does not consist in mysteries.' The popular mysteries of religion may well be compared with the mysteries of idolatry, and they are quite as destitute of the true moralizing influence; nay, they may be said to be, in many respects, as deleterious to the advancement of pure religion among men.

It has been earnestly contended by Universalists that the doctrine of endless punishment not only constituted no part of the gospel system, but that it was totally incapable of exercising a healthful and healing influence on the hearts of those who received it. We find some concessions on this subject which we are happy to notice. The preacher says,—'On this point I readily admit, that a mere belief in the doctrine of endless punishment, never did, never will save a man from sin.' And then he concedes, inadvertently it may be, the inability of his doctrine to impart salutary moral strength and encouragement, when he states that he has 'no doubt that many a sinner has lived and died in the belief of that doctrine, and been lost forever.' And yet, this is the very doctrine by which the world is to be regenerated, if that is ever done,—the very doctrine, by a belief of which, redeemed souls are to be added to the holy throngs in Heaven, or in consequence of the rejection of which, the 'profoundest hell' is to enlarge her borders and spread farther abroad her devouring flames!—the very doctrine which, as we accept or reject it, passes our names through the community as timely renewed saints or graceless sinners,—the very doctrine which runs as a dark vein of corruption through the popular catechisms and creeds and confessions of faith, and which is being assiduously instilled into the minds of three-fourths of the children and youths in the land. And yet, after all, it is the doctrine which, according to the candid admission of one of its friends, 'never did—never will, save a man from sin!' O 'tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph!'

In this connection we find another statement that not a little surprises us. It is said to be known 'as a fact, that the doctrine of endless punishment has often been used by the Holy Spirit to arrest the sinner in his course of iniquity, and to lead him to seek a way of salvation from sin, though a mere belief in that doctrine has never saved any man, and never will.' Now I, for one, 'know' no

such thing. What is the doctrine of endless punishment? In its most lenient orthodox form, it represents the infinite Father as calling into being myriads on myriads—tribe after tribe—of immortal creatures with the certain knowledge that their existence would subject them to the sufferance of an eternity of immeasurable and unmitigated woe! And for this doctrine to be at all effective, it must be so preached and hurled in upon the heart that all our selfism shall be alarmed and aroused,—so thundered down into the still depths of the soul, that a host of scorpion fears and forebodings shall be startled into the most distracting action. This doctrine, if we may judge by the labors of its public advocates, has little or no power 'to arrest the sinner in his course of iniquity,' unless it is thus brought to bear upon the unworthier selfishness of the sinner. Now, as desirable as Heaven is, as dreadful as hell is represented to be, I do not believe that the Holy Spirit ever makes use of any such *unholy* means to secure our acceptance of the one, or our avoidance of the other. I do not question but that this doctrine has arrested many a sinner and turned him into the ways of virtue and religion. I do not question but many sincere and pious people profess to believe it, and to be not a little indebted to it for their advanced spiritual progress. But it would be quite as creditable to their moral sentiments could they attribute their attainments in the divine life to some higher and holier influence. I doubt not but many have been made comparatively good indirectly by this means; but while I concede this, I affirm also, that far more effectual had been the labor of religious teachers had their learning, and talents, and industry been directed toward the forth-putting of efforts more in accordance with inspired examples. It occurs to me that it was the earnest preaching of the kingdom of Heaven, rather than of the kingdom of hell, that characterised the ministry of the Forerunner, and of Jesus, and of the holy Apostles. No man can assert it as 'a fact' that the doctrine of endless punishment tends to 'arrest the sinner in his course of iniquity,' more self-assuredly or authoritatively, than I can affirm that it is emphatically the goodness of God that superinduces repentance and reformation, and that no mightier motive can be presented to elicit our supreme affection for Him, than that he has first loved, and will forever love us. And these are peculiarly the sentiments of Universalism.

It should not be forgotten that while this doctrine in some instances may have reformed sinners, in others it may have failed to do so, — nay, may have given the strongest encouragement to indulge in sin. Indeed, our author admits that he has 'no doubt that many a sinner has lived and died in the belief of that doctrine, and been lost forever, and that many others will follow in the same course, loving their sins too well to renounce them,' even with the tremendous conviction fastened upon the mind that an eternity of indescribable woe awaits the wicked! While it may have made

some good, it would be well to remember that it has encouraged a licentious spirit in others; and also that it has moreover, according to the admission of one of the most eloquent advocates with which it was ever favored,—'made some mad and others melancholy.' Say not, then, that it is the especial instrument 'used by the Holy Spirit' for the reformation of men. The Holy Spirit has no need of aid so various and conflicting, and so generally deleterious in its effects.

We have an occasion to refer here to another prominent trait in the Universalist theory. It regards the character of the divine discipline. Universalists materially differ from other religionists on the subject. Their system speaks very definitively of the *justice* of punishment and the *certainty* of its infliction. They attempt no patch-work compromise here,—no virtual selling of indulgences. They say not that an eleventh-hour repentance can rectify and atone for the misdoings of a whole life, or that there is any other possible way of avoiding the just demerits of sin. Their standing warning, which is also the warning of the Bible, is, that the way of the transgressor is hard,' and that God 'will by no means clear the guilty.' Whether the preacher was aware that this sentiment constituted one of the chief peculiarities of our doctrine, we have no precise means of knowing; but that he considers it as one which entirely 'harmonizes with the whole tenor of sacred scripture,' seems evident from the following testimony,—'I think no candid mind will deny that to set clearly before a transgressor the certain consequences of his evil courses, has some tendency to restrain him, and to influence him to look after a way of safety.' He here comes quite fairly upon Universalist ground, and concedes what we have long been contending for; but, as a candid friend we must assure him, that he will never weaken our confidence in Universalism by such statements as the foregoing, or as the following, for which he has fully prepared us. 'It is admitted freely,' he says, 'that the *power* of the gospel to save men from sin does not consist in the doctrine of endless punishment.'

Why then this continual warring against us for freely admitting and openly declaring the same thing? Why is there any alarm at 'the efforts which are made to persuade men' to the embrace of our faith, if it is in so many of its most essential points, so acknowledgedly accordant with scripture? But perhaps we shall find such questions gratuitous, when we learn our great 'mistake,' to the neighborhood of which we now approach.

At this point of our progress it is proper that I should remind you, that the object of the sermon preached at the Installation, was to show, first, in what the power of the Gospel did not consist, and secondly, in what it did consist. The preacher of the review Sermon, after enumerating the particulars affirmed in the second department of the discourse he examines, remarks that 'the funda-

mental and fatal mistake of the preacher consisted, as I expect to show, from the Bible, not so much in what he did say, as in what he did not say.' Now we confess our perception is not sufficiently acute to enable us to judge how far the 'mistake' may be justly considered 'fatal.' How *it*—whatever should be signified—could be called a 'fundamental and fatal mistake,' we do not conceive, unless we were promised a *say* which was not uttered. But this does not appear.

The 'love of God' was mentioned as the first elemental principle in the power of the Gospel, and to this there is hardly a definite exception taken, although we are subsequently informed that there was an entire failure of the attempt 'to show in what the power of the Gospel to save men from sin does consist.'

On the principle just stated, the preacher remarks,—'I freely admit the influence of the love of God in saving men from sin; and that if ever saved from sin, it will be in loving God because He first loved us. I admit the influence of that new command of Christ, which requires all men to love one another as He has loved them.' But we are very plainly told that this 'influence' is by no means unrestrictive and impartial. The love of God, embracing all men and delighting in the happiness of its objects, is to fail of effecting this great desideratum, and is of course to be forever disappointed. The command of Christ, enjoining the love of all men to each other and to God, and being incapable of fulfilment without this strict universal compliance, is to prove immensely ineffectual, and is therefore to remain forever unfulfilled. Such is the theology we meet with in this portion of the discourse.

We give another extract:—'I admit that the punishment of the *Gospel* is disciplinary, yielding the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby and consequently reformatory, and inflicted only in the present life, while the punishment of the future life which the Bible calls the second death, is *retributive*, i. e. meted out to all that cannot be reclaimed by the love of God, according to their works.'

On this quotation we remark, 1, That punishment is unquestionably disciplinary and reformatory, as Universalists hold, and as it is here conceded, and also that it is, in the sense here expressed, 'retributive—i. e.—meted out to all according to their works,' but that there is no inspired authority for asserting that while one portion of the divine chastisements is corrective and remedial, another portion, confined to the next world, is of a totally different character. 2, That it is not yet proved that the term 'second death' is significant of punishment in the 'future life,' and even if such a thing were susceptible of proof, it would not be very essentially against us, as we are scripturally assured that the time shall eventually transpire when 'there shall be no more death.' 3, That punishment 'according to our works' could not possibly be endless

or infinite, as no finite being, who was a subject of laws adapted to his nature, and a wise and benignant sovereign would ordain none others, could in no way render himself deserving of such infinite retribution, and therefore, God could not bestow it. And 4, That there is no just ground for the intimation that there are some who 'cannot be reclaimed by the love of God.'

But on this last topic there is a slight attempt at proof. How far the effort is successful the hearer can decide. 'That there will be those,' he says, 'who will never be reclaimed from sin by the love of God, we learn from the Bible when it speaks as in the second chap. of the 2d Epist. to the Thess. of "them that perish, because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And that for this cause God shall send them strong delusion to believe a lie that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'" Whatever may be the true purport of this passage, it is certain that it has but a very indirect bearing upon the subject in question. It speaks, be sure, of 'the love of the truth,' but this and the love of God for us, are two things widely different. Its most fearful interpretation is, that they who reject the truth and do deeds of unrighteousness, shall be justly damned, punished,—punished to the uttermost extent of their deserts; but this would not conflict with the love of God, or tend in the least to prevent its final efficacious operation. Again:—'The Bible also speaks of THOSE who know not "that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance; but after their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."' This text is of the same character as the other, and is equally as irrelevant to the subject. If it is the peculiar property of any particular class of persons at the present day, it certainly appertains to those who 'know not that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance.' We may here state in passing, that whenever the words 'wrath,' 'vengeance,' &c. occur in the Bible in allusion to God, they refer, not to any principle or passion influencing the Divine Mind, but to his outward dealings as they appear to us.

This is all the argument and proof we have in substantiation of the position that there are some who 'cannot be reclaimed by the love of God.' And this we find to be entirely inapplicable and unsatisfactory. What reasonable man would adopt such a sentiment on such questionable authority,—a sentiment which most plainly 'limits the Holy One of Israel,' and attributes to the great principle of the Divine nature,—Love,—the utterest impotency? What hope is there if the love of God fails? We have already been impressed with the conviction that the doctrine of endless punishment is even still more inefficient. And yet the latter is a means 'used by the Holy Spirit,' (!) and 'the influence of the love of God in saving men from sin is freely admitted,' yet both are to

prove extensively unsuccessful, and consequently 'there will be those who will never be reclaimed.' So powerless is almighty love!

Now we declare the opposite doctrine to be the scriptural one. There are passages interspersed throughout the Bible, unequivocally teaching us in substance, that nothing can 'separate us from the love of God,' and that in the consummation of the mediatorial reign, Divine affection will not have an occasion to reconcile itself to the endless perishing of a single object of its fruitless solicitude. No such event will ever occur in the administration of that Being who is infinitely wise, and good, and omnipotently great!

After having satisfied himself that there was no specification of the true power of the Gospel in the Sermon he reviews, our author proceeds to inform us of what he conceives this true power to consist. But we are not certain that we understand him. There is not a little indefiniteness attached to his definition. There are numerous passages of scripture quoted, nearly all of which embrace the term 'Holy Ghost,' and which speak of the operations of the Holy Ghost in cleansing the hearts of men. Nearly all of the texts, we believe, refer to the great Pentecostal era, when men were awakened and converted by the miraculous Apostolic agency. But believers do not now 'cast out devils,' 'speak with new tongues,' 'take up serpents,' 'drink any deadly thing' unharmed, and lay healing hands upon the sick; and there are many other evidences which serve to convince us that the period for the manifestation of especial divine influences, has long since passed by. But we by no means deny the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal and sanctification of the heart.

After reading those scriptural quotations and the brief remarks appended to them, we come to this summary conclusion:—'And we have the positive asseveration of the Son of God, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water" i. e. led to the exercise of true repentance, "and of the Spirit," i. e. sprinkled with clean water, or baptised with the Holy Ghost, and cleansed from all his filthiness and from all idols—he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," which "is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." But we find nothing in this that is particularly opposed to Universalist teaching, or inconsistent with the statement that the love of God constitutes the leading element in the power of the Gospel.

We quote the concluding remarks on this subject:—'Here then we clearly see, what it is which makes the Gospel of Christ the power of God unto salvation from sin. It is our Lord Jesus Christ, baptising with the Holy Ghost, and thus cleansing men from all their filthiness and from all their idols; thus bringing them into God's kingdom of righteousness, and establishing that kingdom in their hearts—filling them with righteousness, as Christ says those shall be, who hunger and thirst after it; and giving them peace

and joy in the Holy Ghost—making their peace as a river and their righteousness as the waves of the sea. This gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. It is the dispensation of God's Almighty spirit, "Burying us with Jesus Christ, by baptism of the Holy Ghost unto death", i. e. *making us dead to sin*—"like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." It is enabling us to "put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God," (i. e. after the likeness of God) "is created in righteousness and true holiness." ' Now there is nothing against us in all this,—so far from it that it 'harmonizes with the whole tenor' of our doctrine; but we may ask, would there be any such operation or result, were not the love of God at the bottom of it? And why not then call the power of the Gospel the love of God? What are the ministrations of the Holy Spirit, but the influences of the love of God urged forward by the power of God?

We must here express the conviction that the 'fatal mistake' has been greatly mis-taken, and that the first preacher was not, after all, so unfortunate as he was supposed to be.

We have now concluded all we have at present to say concerning the main body of the discourse. We have met with several very candid concessions,—testimonies cheerfully given in our favor; and we have found the expression of other sentiments which, though probably not so intended, perfectly coincide with the Universalist views. And thus the

> 'Unwilling evidence, and therefore strong,
> Affords my cause an undesigned support!
> How disbelief affirms what it denies!'

So true it is that Universalism so decidedly accords with the 'whole tenor of sacred scripture,' and with the unperverted benevolence of human nature, that it is in the 'mouth and the heart' of many an avowed opposer, and that when he would 'lift the note of warning' against it, not unfrequent indirect commendations of it escape him.

We now proceed to a notice of the 'remarks,' in which we find not a little uncharitableness; or, at best, they exhibit remarkable misconceptions of the Universalist doctrine. We were hardly prepared for some of the assertions with which we here meet.

He commences by stating that, 'while the advocates of Universal Salvation take correct ground, in assuming it as the design of the Gospel to save men from sin, they fail entirely of gaining that salvation, by leaving out of the account the work of the Holy Ghost, in renewing and cleansing the heart.'

Now we were never so inordinate in our desires, as this might seem to represent us. We never anticipated 'gaining' 'Universal Salvation.' We have no such presumptuous and exclusive dispo-

sition. That is already secured in the counsels and purposes of the Divine Mind, and the great truth has been revealed by Christ Jesus; but it has been secured and revealed for others than those who are the 'advocates' of the doctrine. But there is great impropriety, we imagine, in asserting that we 'fail entirely of gaining that salvation,' while it is admitted that we take 'correct ground' in regard to 'the design of the Gospel.' Our failure, it must be seen, depends on the failure of that 'design;' and it had perhaps been well to have offered a little proof of the certainty, or even the possibility of such an event. And yet that would have been an attempt to prove that God purposed, and Christ labored in vain! If, by 'leaving out of the account the work of the Holy Ghost in renewing and cleansing the heart,' it be meant that we reject the common extravagant notions of miraculous conversion, then we acknowledge that no such sentiment is included in the account, though it is none the less complete for that reason. But we state, in addition, that the doctrine of the divine agency in 'renewing and cleansing the heart,' as the Bible teaches it, we most sincerely accept. And here you will perceive how utterly our faith has been misapprehended, when it is said that 'it is recognized as the work of God to save from sin, to cleanse the heart, while the Universalist expects to cleanse his own heart, by his contemplations of the universal love of God.' 'The Universalist expects' no such thing. Our faith warrants no such expectation. Contemplations of the universal love of God' will do a good work for the heart, and they constitute a source of happiness which no other religionists can truly claim. But the remark quoted was designed to convey the impression that Universalists suppose the cleansing of the heart to be a matter of mere human agency, than which nothing can be more untrue. We bow to the instruction of the Bible. 'By grace are ye saved.' 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.' Such is our doctrine, and such do we desire to have it represented to be.

The preacher does not seem to place the most exalted estimate upon the 'love of God.' He speaks discouragingly of our contemplations of it. 'Men will,' he says, 'by such contemplations, become no better than whited sepulchres.' This may be very probable to his mind, but if there is any thing else from a contemplation of which more beneficial effects would result, it would have been an act of great kindness had he pointed it out. To us it seems a scripture doctrine, to the practice of which there are many exhortations, that the more we keep our thoughts and affections fastened upon God, who is love, the more likely shall we be to imitate his holy character. Others can think differently if they prefer.

The preacher proceeds to inquire,—

'Have you been raised up by the power of Christ's spiritual re-

surrection from the death of sin and made alive unto God, and had that kingdom of God established within you which 'is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?' If not you are *dead in sin*, and your *expectation* of going where Christ is, in *your present state*, will avail you nothing.'

It can be hardly necessary for us to affirm that whether we are 'dead in sin' or not, we have no such 'expectation.' It is somewhat singular that such a remark should have been made, when, but a few pages preceding, he voluntarily rebutted the common assertion that Universalists 'maintain that men of all characters will be taken to Heaven,' where he very plainly and candidly stated that 'this charge is manifestly false,' and went on to say that 'they believe all men will become *holy*, and then be received to heaven.' How he could have been led into this inconsistency we can not easily divine.

In the same connection we are assured that 'coming to the doctrine of Universal Salvation will not cleanse men from sin, and give them spiritual life,' and we are exhorted to 'abandon all hope of salvation from sin' from this doctrine. This is *one* doctrine. The opposite one,— the one to which we must cling if we reject this,— is that of endless punishment. But a belief in this latter, we have been expressly told, 'never did — never will, save a man from sin.' Where then is the wisdom of the proposed abandonment of our faith ? What superior advantage should we secure? And if we accept not this other confessedly unsaving doctrine, then 'to whom shall we go?' Nay, leave us alone, unless you have something better than the religion of universal and immortal love,— unless you have something more safe than the immovable purposes of Omnipotence, to give us!

We now come to something concerning the barrenness of our doctrine in holy influences. Perhaps, as it is intimated, there is no 'spiritual life' in our system,— perhaps there is no 'baptism' of the divine Spirit among us, —perhaps we know not what this 'means, '— perhaps 'Christ has never been revealed' in us, 'the hope of glory,'— perhaps we 'know nothing about' the riches of Christ,— perhaps we 'are only expecting to be saved from sin, because all will be,' — perhaps we 'are not looking to Christ by faith, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and expecting to be filled;' and then again we affirm, with something more than a *perhapsing* emphasis, that all of these intimations are as destitute of charity as they are of substantial proof. We have yet to learn that Universalism possesses fewer reforming, life-giving energies, than all other systems. We have yet to learn, too, that the Universalists are a more utterly irreclaimable and grace-forsaken people than all others, or that they are even yet deserving of so severe a judgment as is here pronounced upon them. And we have yet to learn, that there now exists a body of religious believers who

are so peculiarly favored of Heaven, that they are justified in appropriating to themselves all the moral goodness in this world, and all the infinite happiness of the next.

We meet with another singular statement:—

'There is reason to fear, that very many who regard themselves as in a state of salvation, have mistaken the grand design of the Gospel.' But it is freely admitted that Universalists have assumed 'correct ground' in regard to the 'grand design of the Gospel.' 'They seem to suppose, that the great design of the Gospel is, to save men from hell,' [of course he cannot here allude to the Universalists] 'at the close of their existence on earth, and that by looking to Christ to save them from the final doom of the wicked, when they die, they are then to live in a great measure in sin, inasmuch as their salvation is secured. Many, who say that they groan being burdened, under a sense of their vast uncleannesses, have no hope of being cleansed from sin, until death comes to their deliverance, supposing that somehow or other, about the close of life, they shall be so cleansed, as to be meet for heaven.' We have all along contended that this was the legitimate tendency of the popular forms of religion. We are thankful for this confession. He proceeds:—'This is true of many who believe that the future doom of the wicked' is endless misery. Here he is unquestionably in the right. He says nothing more than what we all know to be true. But when he adds,—'and of many who rest their hopes on the doctrine of Universal Salvation,' we affirm that he virtually contradicts his own statement, for he has more than once acknowledged that Universalists believe, not in salvation from hell, but from sin. I do not question but that persons may misunderstand our faith. The author of this discourse misunderstands it. There may be individuals who profess a greater friendliness for our doctrine than for any other, but who may nevertheless not be strictly well-informed concerning its principles. Hence, not knowing the doctrine, and of course, not embracing it in reality, they cannot be justly said to be Universalists.

It is said further, 'Many of both classes are supposing, that, a little before death, or in the very instant of death or immediately after death, something or other will transpire, that will complete in their souls the necessary work of purification, and make them fit for heaven.' If this is true, why not first reform the home-class, and forbear denouncing us for our own 'mistakes' and the mistakes of our neighbors? There is an old adage referring to something about the duties of charity at home. But we cheerfully acknowledge that religious people generally are too indifferent about religious matters, and that they are too much inclined to rest satisfied in the adoption of sentiments which they have but superficially examined. Yet we are confident that the Universalists are as slightly culpable in this respect as others.

Here is a remark bordering more upon the doctrinal, 'The Bible nowhere intimates that any such change is to take place in any soul at or about the time of departure from the world.' We shall see. 'About the *time* of' this change, we have now little to say. Whether it be at the moment of the soul's 'departure from the world,' or at some subsequent period, is not, we conceive, a matter of essential importance. But that there must be a change all men must necessarily admit. We know that 'without holiness no man can see the Lord,' and that the very holiest on earth are not yet prepared to mingle with the holy in heaven, and therefore must there be a change, and therefore again, does the Bible very plainly intimate that such a change shall take place. 'Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall ALL BE CHANGED. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.' Such is one, from among several, of the intimations of the Bible.

We here meet with a few additional observations which were intended to bear against the moral tendencies of our faith, and to point out the more salutary influences of orthodoxy. But they are wholly misdirected. With a slight variation in the expression, their application may be reversed with the strictest propriety: 'O, it is a dreadful opiate to the consciences of men, to teach them, that though they sin against God every day, in thought, word and deed, they may yet' by a speedy repentance at the most convenient season, escape all punishment, and gain Heaven. 'It lulls into carnal security. It operates as a standing excuse for all the iniquities which men may chance to commit. While on the contrary, our Savior's doctrine, that if we believe not in Him as our Savior from sin, we' shall be promptly, positively, justly punished, 'tends most directly and powerfully to arouse from the slumbers of worldliness and sinful pleasure,' and to secure our 'deliverance from our spiritual foes.' And this latter is emphatically the course pursued by Universalists. We have before told you, that our doctrine sets 'clearly before the transgressor the certain consequences of his' viciousness; and this, it is freely acknowledged, has a restraining and reforming influence. At the same time it is allowed that 'the power of the Gospel to save men from sin, does not consist in the doctrine of *endless* punishment.'

I have already detained you so long that I shall pass over two or three controverted texts, which are simply alluded to in this discourse. They are passages which Universalists find no difficulty in explaining; and they are also passages upon which no reasonable man would predicate the doctrine of endless banishment from God. They can hardly be supposed, even by the cursory reader of the Bible, to refer to a sentiment so inconceivably awful, when there are so many other texts which speak of the universality and the

ever-enduring nature of God's 'tender mercy,'—of the final successful travail of the Redeemer's soul in behalf of humanity,—of the raising up at the last day of all given to him,—and of the eventual glorious completion of the work of redemption in the gathering together of 'all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him, that God shall be, forever and ever, the ALL-IN-ALL! And then, at the arrival of that grand consummation era, shall the tribes of our regenerated race universally, emphatically,

'in love unite,
And bow to Reason's sway;
Then systems false, upheld by might,
Shall swiftly pass away;
No more shall rage the fearful storm
That drowns the world in blood,
For all mankind that day will form
One glorious brotherhood!'

AMEN.